

**State Board of Education
Briefing Paper
School Accreditation**

Issue/Definition: Under current state law, accreditation in Washington is voluntary. Currently, public and private schools have the option to seek state-recognized accreditation.

Expiration of SBE Authority: Upon the effective date of E2SHB 3098, (mid to late June 2006) the SBE will have authority to grant state-recognized accreditation status only to private schools.

Current Accreditation Options

Public Schools:

- Use the SBE accreditation option that is administered through the Educational Service Districts (ESDs). This option incorporates an on-site appraisal team of education professionals (from outside the district in which the school is located), that is organized and trained by the ESD to review and evaluate the school's School Improvement Plan (SIP), and the process that led to it. The "uniform" cost across all nine ESDs is approximately \$3,500.
- Use the regional accrediting body option – Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS). This option incorporates a site visit and also involves checking if the school satisfies certain input requirements (number of books in the library, staffing ratios, etc.) The cost varies on a sliding scale based on student enrollment. The site visit is an extra cost to the school.

Private Schools:

- Private schools can use either of the options above, or seek accreditation through one of their own mission-driven private school accrediting bodies that has been "approved" by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Private Schools Advisory Committee (PSAC). If that private school wishes to have the additional "State" accreditation status, they must be "approved" by the SBE via their private accrediting body. That body must also have been approved by the SBE as an accrediting body.

RCW Cite: RCW 28A.305.130(10) Accredited, subject to such accreditation standards and procedures as may be established by the state board of education, all schools that apply for accreditation...

State Board Role: Current language: Any public or private school seeking state-recognized accreditation status must comply with the accreditation rules adopted by the State Board. WAC 180-16-220.

OSPI Role: N/A

Effect on Districts: Districts have the authority to mandate that all schools in the district be accredited.

Recommendation from SBE Staff: A recommendation from an ESD or an approved accrediting body to grant accreditation to a school does not appear on a State Board agenda unless the school has satisfied the respective requirements under the option selected by the school. Schools seeking approval have honored the requirements in place and have been evaluated by an ESD, or NAAS staff, or the PSAC. If the application passes the respective requirements of any of the three options, the State Board still has final authority to grant approval.

- Staff recommends the Board exercise its accreditation authority for public schools until that authority is repealed effective June 7, 2006. (The Board's accreditation for private schools is not affected by E2SHB 3098, passed by the 2006 Legislature and signed into law.)

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